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By- Berdahl, Robert O.
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The first step in studying a State educational coordinating agency should be to establish the facts concerning both its enabling legislation and its present status, including whether it is formal or voluntary, consolidated, and a responsibility of the State Department of education. The study should also analyse the agency's historical development and determine how the pattern of State politics affected the attitudes of the governors and legislators toward higher education. To understand the present functioning of the coordinating system, an analysis is required of the multiple interrelationships among three major constituencies: Higher education, State government, and the coordinating board. Primary issues include allocation of State fiscal resources, budgetary review, policy formation and planning, State and Federal aid programs, and the role of the coordinating agency as an intermediary between higher education and government. Assessment of future trends is necessary to determine coordination patterns most appropriate to a State sy"tem of higher education at different periods in its development. (JK)

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH ON STATEWIDE SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by: Robert O. Berdahl, Director
Study of Statewide Systems of Higher Education
American Council on Education
Washington D.C. 20036
Telephone: (202) 483-6620

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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This memorandum and the document entitled "Progress Report" are offered as supplements to the original Research Outline issued last fall. The Progress Report gives the tentative timetable for the study, describes the enlargement of the Advisory Committee, lists the twenty states which have now been chosen for intensive study, and enumerates the various research projects which are being undertaken by other scholars in related fields. This memorandum is intended primarily to aid those persons other than the ACE staff who will be studying the coordination of higher education in one or more of our selected states, and to elaborate on the brief statement of research methods given in the Outline.

If the persons undertaking these related studies were less experienced, or if there were not already in existence a considerable body of literature describing similar studies (in particular Lyman Glenny's book, Autonomy of Public Colleges), a detailed set of guidelines might have been required. However, it seems to me that, given the present situation, a general framework will suffice as a guide. This is particularly true since those of us working on these state studies plan to have several conferences, the first in Ann Arbor on February 12, and a second probably in mid-summer, to compare results. We of the ACE feel fortunate in having obtained the services of so many excellent scholars to help us broaden our coverage. While we do not plan to publish their analyses as part of our report, their findings will enrich our understanding and strengthen our comparative judgments. We have asked for the right to quote from their manuscripts if this seems appropriate.

To compensate for the lack of breadth which comes from studying only one or two states, I would suggest that the recent literature listed in the Outline be reviewed. In particular, Miss Pliner's study, Planning and Coordination, brings up to date much of the factual information about coordinating and governing boards in the many states.

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1. Establishment of Present Facts:

A good place to begin the study of a particular state coordinating agency is to examine its enabling legislation and present status to see if your interpretation of the facts about its powers, structure, etc. agrees with those listed on the Pliner tables. We have decided, as a preliminary matter, to depart from her basic classification scheme of the various types of boards; but we reserve the right to alter our categories after we have studied the several systems in depth.

Our tentative classification scheme is as follows:

(a) states with neither formal nor voluntary coordinating boards

(b) states with voluntary coordinating bodies

(c) consolidated governing boards

(d) coordinating boards

(e) State Board of Education responsibility

There may be sub-types within the last three categories according to board jurisdiction (some include and some do not the junior colleges and private sector), and within the coordinating category according to membership (some are all "public", i.e. non-institutional members, and some are mixed). We have found Paltridge's further classification of coordinating boards as either advisory or regulatory in power something which can be established more readily by looking at their de facto operations than at their de jure charters. We may return to this criterion later.

2. Evolution of the Present System:

Having completed a determination of the "statics" of the present system, the researcher can turn to an analysis of its "dynamics" through time - past, present and future. A brief analysis of the evolution of the present system is often very useful in understanding its current functioning. To analyze this evolution over the past ten or fifteen years, questions such as the following might be appropriate:

(a) How long has the present structure been operating and how many previous kinds of coordination have there been?

(b) Did size, powers, membership, or budget of the coordinating agency alter appreciably through time?

(c) If a pattern of change is apparent, what are the main reasons for the state having moved from one type of coordination to another (e.g., emergence of new factors which made coordination more necessary; issues causing friction within the family of higher education or between higher education and the state; role of specific personalities in the universities, the coordinating agency, or state government, etc.)?

(d) If there has been a long continuity of one type of coordination, what are the reasons for this? Is it an evidence of success?

(e) Taking three or four of the main causes of friction within higher education, or between it and state government, over the past ten years, who took what positions on these issues, and why? Who had the most to gain or lose? Who approved "the rules of the game" (written or unwritten)? Who wanted to change them or break them?

(f) How did the pattern of state politics during this time affect the attitudes of the governors and legislators towards higher education? What issues, if any, had political importance?

(g) What state planning efforts in higher education, if any, occurred in the recent past and by whom were they initiated? What major recommendations were made and to what extent were they implemented? By whom were they supported or opposed?

3. Analysis of the Present Functioning of the System:

This is not only the most important but also the most complex part of the study, for it involves a sophisticated analysis of the multiple interrelationships among and between some eight to ten different constituencies, each with its own perspective, aspirations, and fears. For purposes of rough analysis we will divide them into three major groups: higher education, state government and politics, and the coordinating board; but it should be realized that differences within the groups are sometimes greater than differences between them.

The first, higher education, includes all the sub-divisions of public universities, state colleges, branch campuses and/or community colleges, and the private sector, both sectarian and non-sectarian. Within these types of institutions the researcher should normally sample opinions in some or all of the following categories: presidents and vice presidents, deans, trustees, faculty, and perhaps students.

The second group, that of state government and politics, centers normally on the office of the Governor and his Department of Finance, but also includes the Legislature and the Legislative Analyst, and probably the State Board of Education. Behind these governmental figures stand the public at large and various pressure groups, both those specifically concerned with education and others, such as tax-payers' associations, which have views relevant to educational issues. Mass media should probably be included in this category since their views both influence and reflect the attitudes of the public on higher education, and because knowledgeable reporters are often in an excellent position to reveal political information which some professionals may not be willing to divulge.

The coordinating or governing board constitutes the third group, among which the executive director, some key staff, and a sampling of the board membership should be interviewed.

Ideally the researcher would be able to catalog the position of each constituency within these three major groups on all of the current issues in higher education, but such a task is obviously too large for the scale of our study. Thus, I recommend making a first priority of finding which five or six issues are the most crucial, and getting the names of those persons in the various groups who will have the most knowledge about them. Hopefully, such a sample will be broad enough to reveal the internal divisions within the groups, particularly that of higher education. It is essential to gain some understanding of why coordination on some issues looks good to certain segments of higher education and threatening to others.

Although each state will probably have some unique side issues in higher education, we would suggest, due to the shortage of research time, that these be pursued only far enough to determine their relevance to the main issues chosen for concentration. We offer below a list of those which we have found to be of great concern in many states. Sone relate to the substance of public policy decisions in higher education and some to the procedures by which these decisions were made.

1. Allocation of state fiscal resources to higher education, both in terms of total amount and particular institutional budgets.

2. Nature of budgetary review process exercised by the coordinating body, state budget officer, and state legislature.

3. Planning in higher education, both in terms of policy and process. (But remember that Palola of Berkeley and Halstead of USOE are both studying aspects of this topic in depth: see Progress Report).

4. Allocation of role and scope functions within the public sector, including in particular the approval to grant Ph.D. programs.

5. Location of new campuses.

6. Issues connected with branch campuses or junior colleges. (Usdan and Minar will be examining the control of the thirteenth and fourteenth grades: see Progress Report).

7. State aid to private higher education. (Knoller will be writing on this: see Progress Report).

8. Impact of federal aid programs on state planning and coordination. (Cox of SREB will handle this).

9. Miscellanecus issues: admission standards, tuition fees, year-round operation, faculty salaries.

10. Role of the coordinating agency as an intermediary between higher education and government: how is it viewed by each group? How does it receive and interpret political definitions of the public interest in higher education? How does it receive and interpret educational aspirations for development and fears about autonomy? How, specifically, does it function with respect to planning, budget review, and program approval?

At a previous conference on coordination in December, we decided that it would be a better technique to put a smaller number of open-ended questions to interviewees than a long list of narrow ones. Furthermore, we felt that many of the same questions should be put to persons in each of the three groups, in order to understand their differing perspectives on the same issues. The individuals to be interviewed will vary greatly in their knowledge and understanding of these major issues. Thus the interviewer needs to conduct the discussion in such a way that the interviewee, while not being placed on the defensive, will nevertheless make clear the topics about which he is and is not well informed. Obviously, in the latter case, the matter is not pursued very far. But sometimes the lack of knowledge in a certain person or office is in itself a significant fact to be established.

While we are primarily interested in the analysis of the present functioning of the system, we hope that the researcher will go beyond this and attempt some evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the system. We appreciate that this is not easy to do after a period of research as brief as these must be. But the attempts of others to struggle with the thorny problem of evaluation will greatly aid us in our need ultimately to come to grips with this issue, and the knowledge that such an evaluation must be attempted can often sharpen the perceptions of investigators who might otherwise, in a purely descriptive survey, be more passive. Finally, I note that we are not operating in a situation where agreement regarding evaluations is mandatory: we will feel as free to accept or reject others' normative judgments as our readers will ultimately be to agree or disagree with ours.

We are not yet in a position to go much beyond the brief consideration given to problems of evaluation in our Outline. We are drafting our first state reports now and will undoubtedly have more to say on the topic shortly. For the present, I would suggest the following rationale: the coordinating process can be viewed as one reconciling the numerous differences which exist within higher education and between it and the state as wisely and as felicitously as possible. There are two possible ways to say that the coordinating is "good": first, because the process operates with relative ease of conflict resolution; or second, because it results in "wise" policies. When there are strong disagreements, we cannot prove which side has the wisdom, and even if we could, we do not know whether forcing the wise decision is worth the cost, if it comes at the price of considerable disruption of the balance of power. Those who are sure that one side or the other is "right" will probably evaluate the coordinating body by its ability to reflect that view; but we feel it is safer to assume that any body operating through time in a sensitive context such as higher education should make its policies with a maximum of consensus (from both sides) and a minimum of force majeure. There may be occasions when a good coordinating body must be prepared to stand up aggressively to either state government or the universities; but, as we see it now, these occasions should be rare.

4. Assessment of Future Trends:

In order to discover if there are particular patterns of coordination which are more appropriate to a state during different periods in its development, we are hoping that researchers will extrapolate into the future their assessment of present strengths and weaknesses, taking into account the projected growth of the system and the possible impact of some of the following variables:

(a) reapportionment of state legislatures

(b) possible universal higher education through the fourteenth grade

(c) the beginning or enlargement of state aid to private higher education

(d) the impact of continued federal aid to higher education, particularly if the Peckman/Heller proposal to turn back federal monies to the states were to be adopted.

(e) increased militancy among faculty and student organizations

(f) others?

5. Follow-Up Questionnaire:

We are now tentatively planning to send a follow-up questionnaire to a few key persons in each major group in our selected states, including those states covered by our collaborators in related research. We shall not try to compose the questionnaire until early August, by which time we hope to have well in mind the questions which prove to be significant, and which lend themselves to this type of treatment. On the basis of our field research and the questionnaire, we will hope to wrestle with those two central issues in the coordination of higher education - the public interest and the essential attributes of autonomy.